

NAXOS

BRITISH CLARINET QUINTETS

**Edwin Roxburgh • Kit Turnbull
Nigel Clarke • Martin Ellerby**

Linda Merrick, Clarinet
Navarra Quartet



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New Works for Clarinet and String Quartet

Edwin Roxburgh (b. 1937) Quintet for Clarinet and Strings

Eschewing reliance on ‘programmatic’ inspiration, Roxburgh has conceived this piece as a ‘musical mosaic’ featuring distinctive qualities of the performers. Each section of the piece explores the range of colours and nuance characteristic of Linda Merrick’s playing, and the ‘virtuosic artistry’ of the Navarra Quartet is reflected in their integration into the ensemble, avoiding a purely accompanying role.

The six sections of the piece are characterised respectively by: cascading figurations, sustained melodic counterpoint, a passionate episode for strings, a ‘textural melange’, a percussive scherzo, and a coda using the opening figurations.

Of writing this piece Roxburgh comments: ‘In spite of my fear at having to compete with Mozart’s supremacy in composing for the clarinet, the instrument has occupied a significant place in my output, including a concerto for Gervase de Peyer (recorded by Linda Merrick on NMC D119), *Wordsworth Miniatures* for solo clarinet (commissioned and recorded by Linda Merrick), *Dithyramb I* for clarinet and percussion – and a quartet for clarinets, *Heliochrome*. This indicates how very important Linda’s involvement has been in my music for the instrument’.

Distinguished composer, conductor, oboist and teacher, the work of **Edwin Roxburgh** has been acknowledged in awards too numerous to catalogue, but including, most recently, a British Composers’ Award for his *Elegy for Ur* and an Elgar Trust Award for a BBC commission. His recent opera, *Abelard* was published by United Music Publishers supported by a Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship.

Kit Turnbull (b. 1969) Three Cautionary Tales

Each movement of this piece evokes a story from folklore used to illustrate perceived dangers, hence *Cautionary Tales*.

Carbrooke Dancers, with its irregular dance rhythms, is inspired by the medieval legend of young girls turned to stone after dancing to the music of a strange fiddler in a churchyard. Priests used the legend to warn against merry-making on Sundays and Christian festivals.

The modal colouring and spaciousness of *The Mermaid’s Pool* evoke the legend of drowned young women who lured passers-by into sharing their fate through their hypnotic songs. Mothers used the story to warn children of the dangers of water.

The virtuosic finale, *Lantern Man*, with its busy textures depicts the flickering lights that can appear in marshes through combustion of gases. Characters with names like Jack o’ Lantern, Kit with the Canstick, and Will o’ the Wisp were said to lead people into the marshes, often to their deaths, a story designed to deter night-time wanderers.

Kit Turnbull began his musical career as a keyboard player in a rock band before joining Her Majesty’s Royal Marines Band Service in 1991. From 1997 he studied composition with Martin Ellerby at the London College of Music where he subsequently became a Course Leader and Composition Tutor. A recipient of the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in 1998, he has since completed numerous commissions that have been performed all over the world. His TV and film credits include the music for *Blackadder Back and Forth*.

Nigel Clarke (b. 1960)
Equiano

This piece is inspired by the life story of Nigerian-born Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) who at the age of eleven was kidnapped and sold to slave traders. Transported to Virginia, he was subsequently bought by a British naval officer and taken to London where his master renamed him Gustavus Vassa. He bought his freedom in 1766 and became an important member of the abolitionist movement alongside Clarkson and Wilberforce. His story, documented in his book *The Interesting Narrative*, increased public awareness of the inhumanity of enslavement. Conceived in a single movement, the piece is episodic in structure, with the clarinet representing the character of Equiano and the strings frequently evoking the inhumanity of humanity. The periodic use of antique cymbals and chain is a constant reminder of Equiano's slavery. As the piece builds to its frenetic final moments, the clarinet seems to grow in confidence, and to at least match, if not outdo, the strings.

The compositional originality of **Nigel Clarke** was recognised early in his being awarded the prestigious Queen's Commendation for Excellence whilst a student at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). Appointments have been numerous, and include Associate Composer to the Black Dyke Mills Band, Associate Composer to the Young Concert Artist Trust and Associate Composer to the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall. As a composition teacher he has held prestigious posts at the RAM, London College of Music, and a visiting lectureship at the Royal Northern College of Music. In 2008 he was awarded Doctor of Musical Arts by Salford University.

Martin Ellerby (b. 1957)
Epitaph VII: Memento (Terezin)

The seventh in a series of pieces reflecting atrocities associated with events related to World War II, *Memento* takes as its subject the Nazi concentration camp located at Terezin in the former Czechoslovakia. Nine brief movements form a dramatic *scena* of varied moods. Individual movement titles are taken from a selection of pictures and poems created by the young inmates of the camp. All these, and more, can be found in the widely-available published collection entitled ... *I never saw another butterfly* ... Some 15,000 children passed through Terezin between 1942 and 1944, of whom fewer than 100 survived. The clarinet plays the part of an innocent butterfly able freely to roam around the camp, and to witness different events and experiences. The work is in the form of an arch, beginning with an eerie depiction of the town featuring string harmonics. The central movement, *The Butterfly*, is openly romantic, and the whole piece leads to the final, optimistic movement which uses fragments from Dvořák's *Songs my Mother taught me*.

Martin Ellerby studied with Joseph Horowitz at the Royal College of Music in London and then privately with Wilfred Josephs. He has written in most genres and his output includes four symphonies and eleven concertos. He combines his compositional career with work in education including the post of Visiting Professor of Music to the RAF Music Services. He was awarded a doctorate by the University of Salford in 2006.

Colin Beeson



Linda Merrick

Linda Merrick has an international profile as a clarinet soloist, recording artist and clinician. Specialising in contemporary repertoire, she has been responsible for generating many new works for her instrument by British composers. Linda's catalogue of solo recordings includes new concertos for clarinet and concert band by Nigel Clarke, Martin Ellerby, Kit Turnbull and Guy Woolfenden (Polyphonic), Philip Sparke (Anglo Records) and Stephen McNeff (Campion ASC), plus concertos for clarinet and orchestra by John McLeod (Chandos), Edwin Roxburgh (NMC) and Philip Spratley (Toccata). Her chamber music output includes a première recording of Wilfred Joseph's *Clarinet Quintet* with the Kreuzter Quartet (NMC), chamber works by Malcolm Arnold (Maestro) and Martin Ellerby (Serendipity), plus this current release of four newly-commissioned clarinet quintets with the Navarra Quartet. Linda has broadcast as a solo artist for BBC Radio 3, Radio France and DRS1, Switzerland, and performed across America, Asia, Australia, the UAE, and throughout Europe. She is a founder member of the contemporary ensemble 'Sounds Positive', with whom she has premiered over 70 works by British composers and recorded for NMC. Linda is Vice-Principal of the Royal Northern College of Music, where she holds a Professorship. She is the UK representative for Howarth Clarinets.



Navarra Quartet

The Navarra Quartet – **Xander Van Vliet**, **Marije Ploemacher** (violins), **Simone van der Giessen** (viola), **Nathaniel Boyd** (cello) – were formed in 2002 at the Royal Northern College of Music under the guidance of the late Dr Christopher Rowland, to whose memory this recording is dedicated. One of the most exciting quartets of their generation, they have won numerous prestigious prizes and awards, including at the 2005 Florence International Competition, and the 2007 Melbourne International Competition. In 2008 they won the Outstanding Young Artist Award at the MIDEM Classique Awards in Cannes, in collaboration with the International Artist Managers' Association.



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 Playing Time
 64:27

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As a medium, the Clarinet Quintet has prompted composers such as Mozart and Brahms to create some of the most inspired music of their autumnal years. This legacy has encouraged Linda Merrick to work collaboratively with four British composers celebrated for their writing for wind instruments to create exciting and innovative repertoire for this combination. This recording, which features one of the UK's outstanding young string quartets, represents a major contribution to the literature for Clarinet Quintet.

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New Works for Clarinet and String Quartet

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| Edwin ROXBURGH (b.1937) | Martin ELLERBY (b.1957) |
| 1 Clarinet Quintet (2007) 10:34 | Epitaph VII: Memento (Terezin) (2008) 22:06 |
| Kit TURNBULL (b.1969) | |
| Three Cautionary Tales (2007) 13:05 | 6 I. The Closed Town 2:19 |
| 2 I. Carbrooke Dancers 5:26 | 7 II. Arbeit 1:51 |
| 3 II. The Mermaid's Pool 3:39 | 8 III. The Silent Hunger 2:15 |
| 4 III. The Lantern Man 3:57 | 9 IV. Fear 1:57 |
| Nigel CLARKE (b.1960) | 10 V. The Butterfly 3:34 |
| 5 Equiano (2007) 18:10 | 11 VI. Tears 2:39 |
| | 12 VII. The Deportation Train 1:39 |
| | 13 VIII. Forgotten 1:42 |
| | 14 IX. To Olga ... 3:52 |



Linda Merrick, Clarinet

Navarra Quartet

Xander Van Vliet, Marije Ploemacher, Violins
 Simone van der Giessen, Viola • Nathaniel Boyd, Cello



Recorded in the Lord Rhodes Room, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, 12–13 July 2008
 Producer/Engineer/Editor: David Lefeber (for Metier Productions) • Booklet Notes: Colin Beeson
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 Cover Picture: House at Terezin Hana Kohnová (© State Jewish Museum in Prague, archive no.129917)